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FURTHER NOTES ON THE ABBEY BUILDINGS AT WESTMINSTER.[1]

By J. T. MICKLETHWAITE, F.S.A.

It is the custom for those who preside over the several sections of the Royal Archæological Institute at its annual gatherings to open each his section with an address. This year I am honoured by your choice to preside over the section of Antiquities, but as we are to visit Westminster Abbey to-morrow, and this is the only opportunity there is for saying a few things which I wish to say by way of preparation for that visit, I propose to do that instead of offering you an address of wider range.

It is now more than thirty years since the late Sir Gilbert Scott wrote the paper which gives the title to the book called "Gleanings from Westminster Abbey." That was, I believe, the first attempt to trace the architectural history of the abbey church, and although much has been written about it since, the story of the building has not been carried further than it was by Scott. I must begin with a testimony to the soundness of his work. Further study of the building, and the use of evidence which he had not, makes it possible to add to it now; but I think the only point upon which I do not accept his conclusion is the date of the building of the quire, which, for reasons to be given soon, I put rather earlier than he did. I do not pretend to have completed the story. A great deal remains to be done, and I am content if I succeed in contributing a little to the final conclusion which others may achieve.

[1] Read in place of the Presidential Address at the opening of the Antiquarian section of the Institute, at the London meeting in 1893.

The church is so closely connected with the other buildings of the abbey that their stories must be taken together, though, to do so within the limits of such an essay as this, much worthy of comment must be passed over, and matters deserving special treatment be only lightly touched.

The accessible written materials for the history of the abbey buildings are the same now as when Scott wrote. But his own later researches in the fabric brought to light evidence, the value of which he knew well, and though he was not able to make full use of it himself he did not churlishly hide it away as the manner of some is, and it is of service now, many years after death has deprived the abbey of his fostering care.

The date of the first beginning of Westminster Abbey is not known. The traditional account of its having been founded early in the seventh century by King Sebert, when Melitus was bishop of London, is not impossible in itself; but if it were true it could scarcely have escaped mention by Bede, who is so careful to record the planting of churches whilst English Christianity was still in the missionary stage, and who does mention several in and near London. But we know that Edward the Confessor found an abbey already existing here, and it is not likely that it was then of very recent foundation. The writer of St. Edward's life, to whom we shall have to refer later, perhaps willing to make the most of his hero's munificence, says that it was poor, and the monks few. But at least they had a church large enough to serve for the new comers, till the new one was built. There are foundations under the turf of the north green, some of which may belong to this earlier Saxon abbey, but there is nothing of which we can be sure, and we do not know even whether its buildings were of stone or of wood.

The architectural history of Westminster Abbey then begins for us with the Confessor's work, and one object of my paper is to show that though he really did very little, and of that little almost nothing is left now, nevertheless its influence remains in later and still existing buildings, which owe their form directly or indirectly to what he did.

Nearly all western monastic orders copied more or less

the arrangement of buildings used by the Benedictines, which had become fixed at least as early as the first half of the ninth century, for it appears in the well known plan of the abbey of St. Gall of that date.[1] And it was probably not new then. For as I have said elsewhere the idea of the Benedictine plan seems to be derived from that of a Roman country house.

Although the greater size of the church makes it appear the most important building of the group, the real essence of the monastic plan, as it was of that of the *Villa*, is the square enclosed court with porticos round it, which formed at once the general living place, and the approach to the various apartments of special use which were arranged outside it. And it seems almost certain that the arrangement of the monastic offices, which remained constant for centuries all through western Christendom, had its origin in some early Italian example—perhaps Monte Casino—laid out when the older civilisation had not yet passed away.[2]

The buildings of an abbey, though laid down from the first according to the regular plan, often took many years to build. Even where, as is often the case in houses of late foundation, it is evident that what now exists is the only permanent building that ever stood there, the work round the cloister is sometimes spread over a century or more. And a comparison of a number of such examples shows us that there was a regular order in the work. There were constitutions of some orders, forbidding a house to be occupied until it was properly furnished with the regular buildings, but, all the same, the monks generally came first and the buildings afterwards. And in some cases the buildings did not come for a very long time.

The ordinary course seems to have been that on settling in any spot the monks made use of any shelter they could get, and then cleared the ground and set out their future house as they hoped to build it, and put up

[1] There is a reduced facsimile of this plan, with an excellent comment on it by the late Professor Willis, in the fifth volume of the *Archæological Journal*.

[2] The St. Gall plan, though following the common arrangement in most things, has no chapterhouse. This is remarkable because the monastic chapterhouse in its earliest and commonest form, separated from the cloister only by an open arcade, is the old *tablinum* quite unaltered.

temporary wooden buildings in the places of the permanent ones, which were then built quickly or slowly according to the means of the house, or the generosity of its benefactors.

The course of the building was not exactly the same in all orders of monks, but the church always came first. The Cistercians who wanted the nave for their lay brothers' quire built all the church, but the older Black monks and some others generally built its eastern half only, which gave them sufficient accommodation for their services. Then they began the cloister and the "regular" buildings round it. If the nave of the church was not finished, enough of its wall next the cloister was built to allow of the completion of that walk, which for convenience we will consider the north, as it generally was. Next in all cases came the east side, where was the chapterhouse and the monks' dorter. The Cistercians then went on with the west walk, and the *cellarium* which was the dwelling of their lay brothers, and completed the square with the south side in which was the monks' frater, and the kitchen. Other orders, whose lay-brothers were fewer, and not so important an element in the community as they were with the Cistercians, generally built the south side before the west.

If the nave of the church had not been finished before, it was generally gone on with after the completion of the square of the cloister. Then the infirmary was built towards the east, and last the buildings of the outer court, towards the west, guest houses, workshops, stables and the like, many of which remained only wooden buildings to the time of the suppression.

Architectural fashion, and the life led in religious houses, changed much in England between the eleventh century and the sixteenth, and both had their effect in modifying the buildings. But as they always remained in use, and the most important changes were carried out only a little at a time, the influence of the earliest work remained even in the latest, and where the first building has quite disappeared, it is often possible to see its form through that of the later work which has taken its place.

Leaving out of account destruction by fire, which happened sometimes, alterations in the regular buildings

were made not so much because they needed them as because they were out of fashion. This was especially the case with the earliest buildings, which were nearly everywhere pulled down or greatly remodelled after the use of window glass became common. A desire for something better often caused the enlargement of churches, which was chiefly done towards the east, where the cemetery was, and there were no buildings in the way. Very often a new quire was built all east of the crossing, instead of in the crossing and west of it as it generally was at first. This change, which was never made at Westminster, sometimes came very quickly. For example, the quire of Conrad, which saw the martyrdom of St. Thomas at Canterbury, was added to the church of Lanfranc only about twenty years after it was finished. The added quire was often the beginning of a rebuilding, which was continued from one part of the church to another till the whole was done.[1]

Where a building was not enlarged its outer walls were more often remodelled than rebuilt: and when closely examined, the lower part and sometimes the whole height is found to be in substance much older than the doors and windows and other features which give the architectural character, but are all of them inserted or added.

The many religious houses founded in England during the twelfth century met a real want, and they were crowded with monks more quickly than they could be built. But this did not last long. After the middle of the fourteenth century there were scarcely monks enough to occupy the buildings, and at the suppression in the sixteenth we find but twenty or thirty men in a house built for the accommodation of hundreds. But with the decrease of numbers, there came an increase in the importance of the individual monk. He became a

[1] Sometimes the development went on quicker than the first building, and churches begun of one form were finished of another. This is the explanation of those one-aisled plans, which seem to some people as if they had been mutilated or imperfectly developed. Some of the smaller Benedictine churches and most of those of the regular canons were begun to be without aisles, and the cloisters were put against the walls of the naves. But before the naves were built greater means or greater ambition caused the builders to desire aisles, but they could not get them on the cloister side, so they had to be content with one on the other side which was free.

dignitary, and his abbot a prelate. The life of a Benedictine in the fifteenth century was more that of a canon than that of a monk, according to the ideas of earlier times, and the resemblance was increased by all monks receiving holy orders, which had not been the ancient custom.

This change in life, which was carried further in some places than in others,[1] showed itself in the buildings. The use of the "regular" buildings, surrounding the cloister, to which in early times the life of the cloysterer or ordinary monk was confined, had in many cases become little more than ceremonial. But they still remained, and were altered when there were means to do it, to suit the taste of the users and their growing attention to personal comfort. The frater was used on special occasions, but we know that at Durham the remaining handful of monks preferred to take their meals in a smaller room, and we may well believe that the same was done in other houses. The dorter was most changed, but it will be convenient to consider it later. The north walk of the cloister, where once the monks had sat at reading time, all in a row on a stone bench against the wall, was now partitioned off and had its windows glazed, and was fitted up with book-cases, and made into a comfortable library with a private study for every monk.

But the greatest changes were in the buildings beyond the cloister. The essence of the Benedictine rule was the common life, but at last this was quite lost in some places. As early as the twelfth century the abbots of the greater Benedictine abbeys lived apart in their own houses, and had their separate property, as indeed their position as great secular lords compelled them to do. Then other officers in gradually increasing number had their separate apartments, and the custom which there was of assigning property to special offices put money into their hands, any balance of which, after the calls of their office had been met, seems to have been at their own disposal. Then we find ordinary monks receiving pensions out of the

[1] Amongst the larger Benedictine houses there is reason to believe that the old discipline was well kept up at Glastonbury, and it was relaxed as much at Westminster as anywhere. And the life in a Cistercian house, though it had lost much of its ancient rigour, was still by comparison a strict one.

common property, and owning money and goods, some of them being rich men who are recorded as benefactors of their own churches. From this to the provision of a separate dwelling for each man is not far, and it was certainly reached in France in the seventeenth century. I can not positively say that it was in England in the sixteenth, but I much suspect that it was at Westminster, where there were many private apartments, some of them being complete houses.

The provision of private apartments began in the infirmary, which it must be remembered was not the place for the sick only, but for all who by reason of old age or temporary indisposition, or by the weakness following bleeding, which was much practised by the monks, were not able to take their share in the duties of the church and cloister; the feeling of the time being that, if a man did not bear his part, his presence was a distraction to the others. Some old men lived always in the infirmary, and the readiness with which the laxer monks found excuse for going there was a subject for satire. There were separate rooms for those who were dangerously ill, but most of those in the infirmary lived together in one great hall. These infirmary halls were sometimes splendid rooms. Such an one as that at Fountains Abbey may be said to bear the same relation to the hall of an ordinary manor house, that the abbey church does to the village church. But when monks became fewer so vast a hall was not wanted, and from the fourteenth century we find that it was everywhere cut up into many rooms, one of which in the middle was larger than the others, and served for a common hall for those to whose private use the smaller rooms were assigned. At Westminster we find the hall taken away altogether, and in its place a number of separate houses ranged round a cloistered court, and in many other infirmaries we can trace houses of considerable size and pretension, which must have been built there for the higher monastic dignitaries to live in.

A like change seems to have been made in the dorter. Originally it was a long open gallery, in which the beds were arranged in rows. Then it was partitioned off into cubicles. Then the cubicles became chambers;

and at Westminster, and some other places, at last a number of houses and chambers were crowded round wherever there was space outside the dorter, but with doors from it, which no doubt satisfied the consciences of those who lived there that they kept that clause of St. Benedict's rule which says that a monk must always sleep in the common dorter.

The buildings of the outer court were more secular than religious, and they followed the fashion of secular buildings elsewhere. Their arrangement and development were not uniform, so that they cannot be spoken of generally.

Now I will ask your attention more particularly to the buildings at Westminster Abbey, the architectural history of which begins, as was said before, with the work of King Edward the Confessor, Our first business, therefore, is to inquire what it was that he really did.

We have two written descriptions of the church which preceded that which we see, and one of them includes more than the church, The earlier was written immediately after the death of Edward, when what he did was scarcely finished; and the other about 1245, when the work of re-building was already begun. Both are printed in Dr. Luard's volume of *Lives of Edward the Confessor* in the Rolls series. The later one is in French verse, and I give it with a translation, which is mainly Dr. Luard's, only a few words being altered :—

" Atant ad funde sa iglise.
De grantz quareus de pere bise ;
A fundement le e parfund,
Le frunt vers orient fait rund,
Le quarrel sunt mut fort e dur,
En miliu dresce une tur.
E deus en frunt del occident
E bons seinz e grantz i pent,
Li piler e li tablementz
Sunt reches defors e dedenz,
A basses e a chapitrous
Surt l'ovre grantz e reaus,
Entaileez sunt les peres,
E aestoirés les vereres ;
Sunt faites tutes a mestrie
De boue e leau menestraucie ;
E quant ad achevé le ovre,
De plum la iglise ben covere,

Clostre i fait, chapitre a frund
Vers orient vousé e rund,
U si ordiné ministre
Teingnent lur secrei chapitre;
Refaitur e le dortur;
E les officines en tur."

In English,

"Now he laid the foundations of the church
With large square blocks of grey stone,
Its foundations are deep,
The front towards the east he makes round.
The stones are very strong and hard.
In the centre rises a tower,
And two at the western front,
And fine and large bells he hangs there.
The pillars and mouldings
Are rich without and within,
At the bases and the capitals
The work rises grand and royal.
Sculptured are the stones
And storied the windows;
All are made with the skill
Of good and loyal workmanship;
And when he finished the work
He covers the church with lead.
He makes then a cloister, a chapterhouse in front
Towards the east, vaulted and round,
Where his ordained ministers
May hold their secret chapter;
Frater and dorter,
And the offices round about."

All this is clearer than written descriptions of buildings generally are, and the fact that the writer erroneously attributed all that he saw to the Confessor does not lessen the value of his evidence as to what was there. We see that before Henry III. began his work of rebuilding, the church had a central and two western towers, which it has never had since, that it had an apse, that there was a cloister, and the usual buildings of an abbey complete, and that the chapterhouse was vaulted and round, which may mean either that it ended in an apse, or that it was completely round like that at Worcester. I think the former is the more likely.

The other description of the building is in a life of King Edward, *qui apud Westmonasterium requiescit*, addressed to his queen, Emma, and therefore certainly not later

than 1074, when she died, and probably several years earlier than that. Dr. Luard has printed it from a twelfth century MS. in the British Museum (Harl. 526), which he says is the only copy known to him. And in pointing out the great value of this contemporary record he says that of modern writers it has only been used by Stow, and some who have copied from him.[1] This is not quite true. As soon as it appeared in print the passage in which we are interested was recognised as the original of one quoted in English "from an ancient manuscript" by Sir Christopher Wren in a report upon the condition of the abbey church, which he made to the Dean and Chapter in 1713, and which has often been printed. But it does not seem to have been noticed that Wren took the passage from the preface of Camden's little book, *Reges Reginæ Nobiles et Alii in Ecclesia Collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterij Sepulti, usque ad annum reparatæ Salutis* 1600. Camden, as Wren after him, gives no reference but *ex antiquo manuscripto*, but the MS. he used was a much better one than that in the British Museum. It is much to be wished that it could be found, and I am not without hope that it may still lie hid somewhere in the chapter library. I give here the two texts in parallel columns :—

Harl. 526.

Principalis aræ domus altissimis erecta fornicibus quadrato opere parique commissura circumvolvitur; abitus autem ipsius ædis dupplici lapidum arcu ex utraque latere hinc et inde fortiter solidata operis compage clauditur. Porro crux templi quæ medium canentium Deo chorum ambiret et sui gemina hinc et inde sustentatione mediæ turris celsum apicem fulciret, humili primum et robusta fornice simpliciter surgit, cocleis multipliciter ex arte ascendentibus plurimis tumescit, deinde vero simplici muro usque ad tectum ligneum plumbo diligenter tectum pervenit.

Camden.

Principalis area domus altissimis erecta fornicibus quadrato opere, parique commissura circumvolvitur, ambitus autem ipsius ædis duplici lapidum arcu ex utraque latere hinc inde fortiter solidata operis compage clauditur. Porro crux templi quæ medium canentium Domino chorum ambiret, et sui gemina hinc inde sustentatione mediæ turris celsum apicem fulciret, humili primum et robusto fornice simpliciter surgit, deinde cochlœis multipliciter ex arte ascendentibus plurimis intumescit; deinceps vero simplici muro usque ad tectum ligneum plumbo diligenter vestitum pervenit.

[1] Dr. Luard's preface is dated March, 1858.

Camden's quotation stops here. The other text goes on :—

"Subter vero et supra dispositi educuntur domicilia memoriis apostolorum, martyrum, confessorum ac virginum consecranda per sua altaria. Haec autem multiplicitas tam vasti operis tanto spatio ab oriente ordita est veteris templi, ne scilicet interim inibi commorantes fratres vacarent a servitio christi, ut etiam aliqua pars spaciose subiret interjacendi vestibuli."

The passage is full of difficulties. To the obscurity of an uncertain text and an inflated literary style must be added the writer's ignorance of the terms of building, and his choice of words rather to round his sentences than to convey any definite idea to the mind of the reader more than that the building which he professes to describe was something big and uncommon. Nevertheless, we have here a description of the Confessor's church by a man who had seen the building of it, and, if we can understand it right, we shall know the likeness of what by contemporary evidence was the beginning of a new fashion of church building in England. And it was from that beginning that the splendid architecture of the twelfth and three following centuries was developed.

As helps to understanding the description we have the later one already quoted, the writer of which had seen the Confessor's building, but did not distinguish it from the later work which continued it, and the very scanty remains of the work itself, which will be described soon.

It is easier to paraphrase the Latin than to translate it literally, and in the following attempt at Englishing some of the ambiguity of the original is purposely retained. It may be rendered, "The main building is rounded and built with very high and uniform arches of ashlar work. And the aisle enclosing that part is strongly vaulted with a double arch of stone springing from either side right and left. Then the cross of the church which is contrived to go over the middle of the quire of the singers to the Lord and by its double abutment on one side and on the other to support the lofty top of the central tower, starts first with a low and strong arch, then spreads out with many winding stairs, artfully going up, and is continued with plain walling up to the wooden roof, which is well covered with lead. Below and above chapels are

put out to be consecrated by their altars to the memories of apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins. All this vast and complicated work was placed far enough eastwards of the old church for the brethren using it not to be interrupted in the service of Christ, and also that there might be a sufficiently spacious approach between them."

The Englishing of *circumvolvitur* by *is rounded* is supported by the French description, which says that the east front was round, and so we may begin by assuming that the Confessor's church had an apse. *Ambitus*, which is no doubt the true reading, seems to imply that the aisles were continued as a passage enclosing the apse. The next clause is not so clear. Sir Gilbert Scott thought it might mean that the aisles were vaulted at two levels, that is above the triforium as well as above the ground story; and this may be right. But it is unlikely that when the vaulting of aisles was used for the first time in England it should be used double. And it seems rather that we have here a literary man's effort to describe an architectural feature for which his vocabulary afforded no fitting name, the like of which he had never seen and the construction of which he did not understand. He could see that the vault was a development of the arch, and the doubleness and the rest was, if I may so express it, his attempt to raise the idea of the arch a power higher and to convey that it did not simply bridge a line between two points but covered and closed (*clauditur*) the whole area of the aisle.

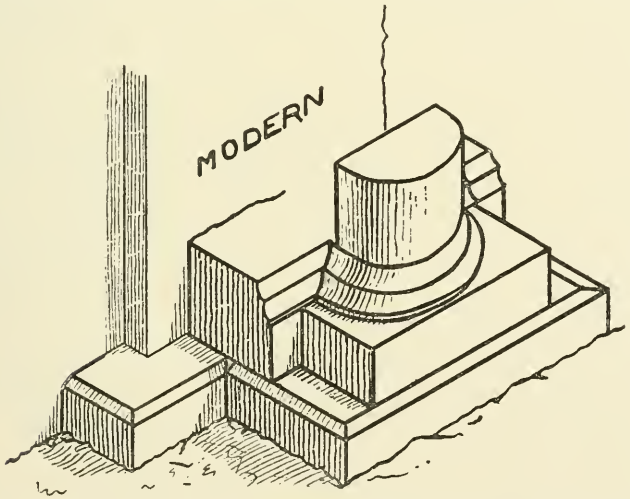
Going on, we find a transept and a central tower, which stood over the middle part of the quire, all clearly indicated; but the architectural description is confused. Stair turrets were in some way conspicuous features in the work, and the grammar of this passage makes them belong to the transept. But the description of the tower seems to have got mixed up with that of the transept, and it is possible that the turrets belonged to it.[1]

[1] It is not safe to quote an eleventh or twelfth century picture of a building to establish any doctrine, but it is worth noting that in the representation of the church at Westminster in the Bayeux tapestry, the four angle turrets of the central tower are made very conspicuous. Some lower turrets are also shown, which may have been at the outer corners of the transept, but from the conventional way of showing the building half in elevation and half in section this is not certain.

In translating *educuntur* as I have done I understand it to refer to chapels built out from the transept eastwards. They were in two stories, the upper being in what we call the triforium, as they are at Gloucester, and the use of the future participle implies that at the time of the writing their altars had not yet been consecrated, and tells us that the church itself was consecrated in a very unfinished state as soon as the quire was fit to be occupied.

The new work was built eastwards of the older Saxon church which continued in use by the monks during the building, and afterwards it seems they were joined by what is called a spacious intervening vestibule, so that the old became the nave and the new the quire of one church. More than that can not have been done to the church during the Confessor's life-time.

Of his building nothing is now to be seen above ground. But in 1866 Sir Gilbert Scott found small fragments in position in three places below the floor of the presbytery, and he formed pits round them which are got at by raising as many trap-doors in the pavement.[1] They are



the inner parts of the bases of the piers which separated the quire from the aisle which went round it, and they were left when the rest was hewn away to make room for the foundation of Henry III.'s work. The piers have been

[1] I have to thank the Dean for ordering one of the trap-doors, which had long been stuck fast, to be opened for the purposes of this essay.

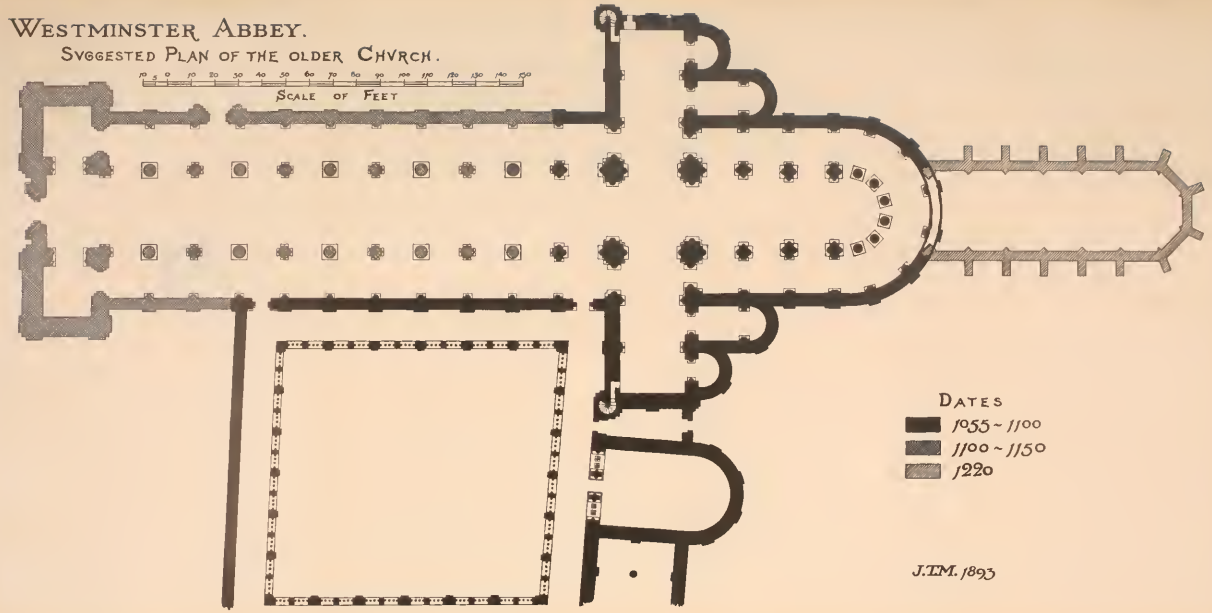
such as we find in other churches built within the eleventh century, as for example at Blyth in Nottinghamshire, where, as here, we have the square wall pilaster with a round shaft in front of it and the base mould of the shaft continued along the face of the pilaster, but stopping with a section at its sides. We have the width of a bay and there is no difficulty in making an elevation of one which must be approximately right. The position of the cloister tells us that the crossing must have been where it is still, but the transepts were probably a bay shorter than they are now. The statement that the tower was above the middle of the quire of the singers shows us that the work was carried for one or perhaps two bays westwards of the crossing. The extent of it eastwards is not certainly known, but I hope to give reason presently for believing that the Confessor's apse stood where the present one does. This gives a length which a comparison with other churches almost contemporary shows to be a likely one. The centre line of the older church was the same as that of the present one, and the total width west of the crossing is unchanged, but east of the crossing the main span has been narrower, and the eastern of the two old bases on the north side, though parallel with the western, is twelve inches nearer to the centre, which is more than could well come from mere irregularity of setting out.

The plan of the Confessor's church which I offer is in some degree conjectural, but it works in the points of which we have evidence and may serve to give a fairly correct general idea of what the building was like and where it stood.[1]

We have seen that in establishing his new foundation the Confessor followed the usual course. He first settled his monks on the ground in such buildings as were there, and then built the quire of the church which they entered as

[1] When this paper was read the growth of the church building was illustrated by a moving diagram, which is difficult to reproduce. Instead of it I now give two plans and two sketch sections scored so as to indicate the different dates. These do not, like the moving diagram, show the form of the church at each successive step, but they contain all the information that it does, and I hope they may be found sufficient to illustrate the story told in the text. Since this paper was read some who have had the use of the material of it have questioned the correctness of the plan of the older building, in the matter of the irregular angle which the range of buildings east of the cloister makes with the church. But the irregularity has been inherited by the later buildings and is there to this day.

Sale 15


WESTMINSTER ABBEY.
SUGGESTED PLAN OF THE OLDER CHURCH.
SCALE OF FEET
DATES
1055 ~ 1100
1100 ~ 1150
1220
J.T.M. 1893

soon as it was ready. Whether when the quire was in building other works were begun by him is rather uncertain. There is early Norman work all through the building on the eastern and southern sides of the cloister, and it has usually been attributed to him. But he left his abbey well endowed, and the work of building need not have stopped at his death. It seems therefore likely that the church was first of all got ready, and then the other buildings gone on with. But there was no delay, and before the end of the eleventh century there were finished the eastern range containing the chapterhouse dorter with its rear-dorter, and the common house and cellars below, the frater which took up all the south side, and some considerable part if not all of the cloister itself. The early work may be traced by its masonry where no architectural details remain, and, where they do, they are such as may be found elsewhere in works done in the reigns of the first two Williams. There is one piece of wall which seems to have been cut down to fit some of this early Norman work, and if it has, it must itself be early. It is in the basement of the great rear-dorter which it divides into two almost equal parts. In it there is a window, the head of which has been cut off to make way for the vault. The window, which is figured in *Gleanings*, p. 12, may perhaps be even earlier than the Confessor's time, or it may be the work of the monks after his death, and its truncation the consequence of a change of intention in the course of the building. No part of the cloister arcade remains in place, but some of its caps have been found, and very fine ones they are. They are preserved in the vestibule of the chapterhouse.

Nothing remains of the west side of the cloister older than the fourteenth century, when the abbot's house stood there, as it probably did from the beginning. But from what is left of the other sides it is certain that the work begun by the Confessor was so far carried out within thirty years of his death as to fix the plan, which was on the whole kept through all the changes and rebuildings of the following centuries.

Meanwhile the church had been standing unfinished and when the claustral buildings were completed the

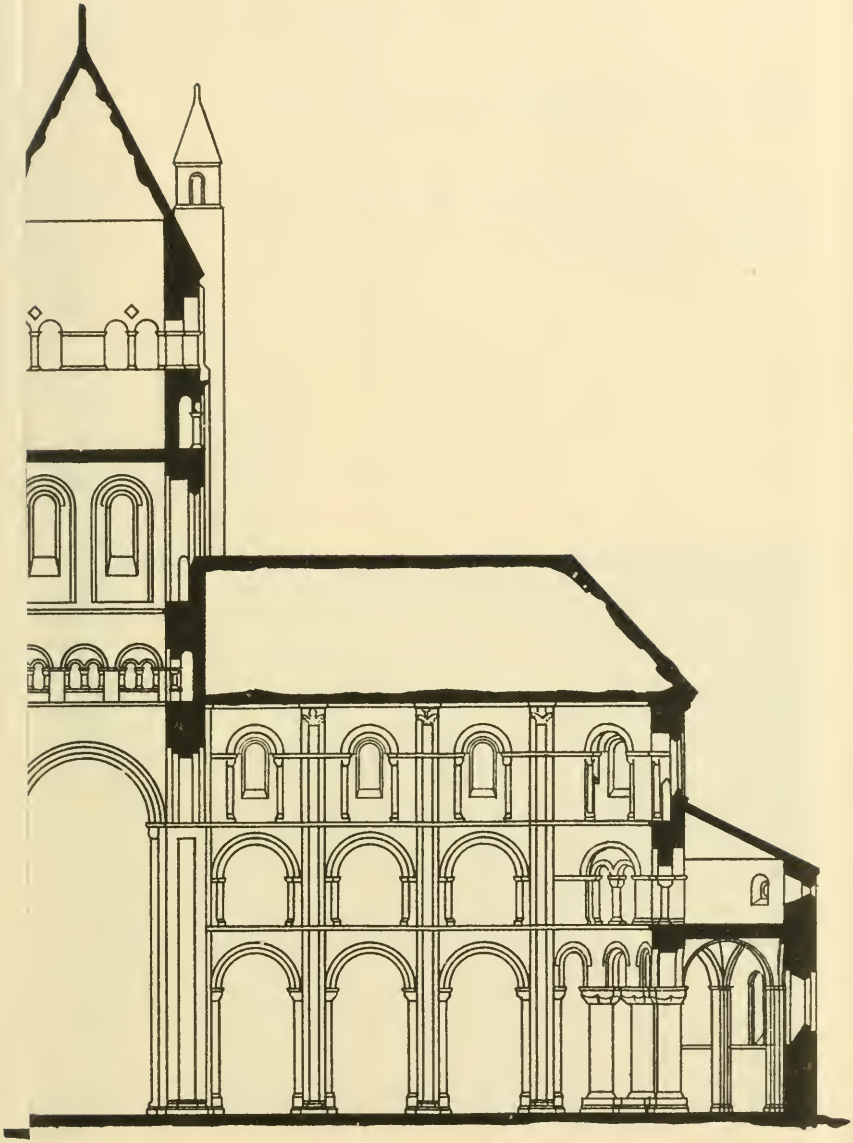
monks, following the usual order, gave their next attention to it.

The old Saxon church was taken down and a nave built to correspond with the Confessor's quire. It was sufficiently old-fashioned when the French *Life* was written to be mistaken for the Confessor's own work, but many fragments, which remain, though out of place, show that it was of the twelfth century and that the cheveron ornament was freely used in it. It was of the same width as the present nave, a good deal of which is indeed built on the old foundation, and I think it was also the same length. It had western towers, and the modern towers for about a hundred feet up have so much of the twelfth century form, that I have sometimes been tempted to think that they inherit it from their predecessors and even that some of the older work may still remain beneath the later casings.

The building of the nave was a great work even for an abbey such as that of Westminster, and it probably took many years to do. It seems to have been finished about 1150. The infirmary came next. Considerable ruins of its chapel remain and seem to date a little past the middle of the century. There was probably a great hall west of the chapel, as at Canterbury and Ely and other great Benedictine houses; but the alterations of two hundred years later have taken away the evidence of it.

I am purposely passing over guest houses, farm buildings and the like, as to the placing of which there was no fixed rule, except that they should be where they would not interfere with the ordinary life of the monks in the cloister. But one more house remains to be mentioned before we go on to consider the general rebuilding which was begun by Henry III.

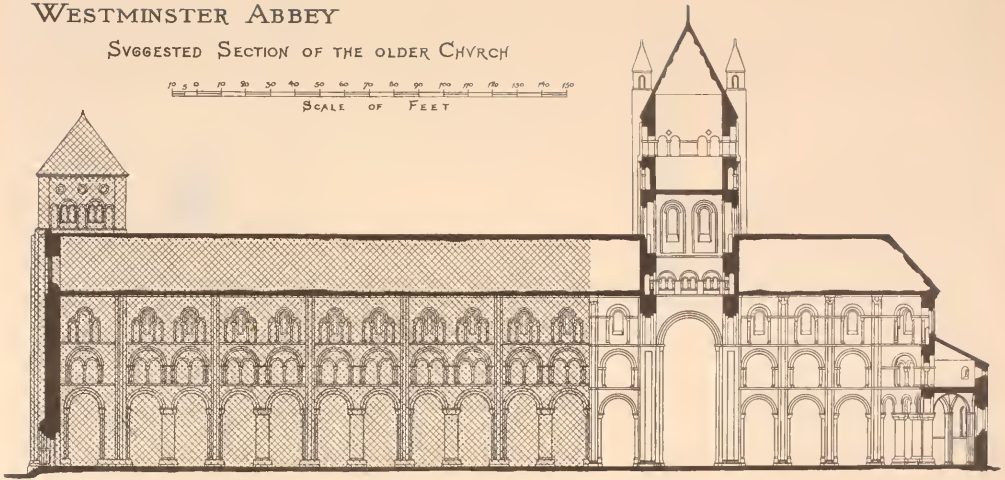
The rule of St. Benedict did not absolutely forbid the use of flesh meat to monks, though the stricter sort abstained entirely from it, or used it only in the infirmary. The Black Monks, to whom by modern custom we confine the name Benedictine, allowed a moderate and occasional use of it. But it was not the custom to serve it in frater. So another house was set apart in which on certain days and in their turns, a few at a time, they might eat it. The comparatively late date of the indulgence is shown by



J.T.M. 1893

Westminster Abbey

Svggested Section of the older Chvrch



J.T.M. 1893

there being no provision for it in the regular plan and no one name by which the house was known everywhere. The most common name seems to have been *Misericorde*, and it was a hall or chamber somewhat away from the cloister in any place which happened to be convenient, but generally near the infirmary, so that it could be served from the kitchen there, for in many houses flesh was not cooked in the regular kitchen.

The misericorde at Westminster was a good-sized hall parallel to, and south of the frater. Much of it still remains mixed with later work in Ashburnham house and it is of the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The building of the misericorde brought the abbey nearly to the state in which it was seen and described by the writer of the French *Life* when it was complete in all its parts. Thenceforth its history is one of rebuildings and "improvements" according to the taste of successive ages. Sir Gilbert Scott's telling of it, so far as it belongs to the church, is true in the main, but later research enables us to add some things and correct a few. Some of the corrections made in his lifetime he quite accepted, and it is now pleasant to me to remember that on what must have been nearly if not quite the last occasion upon which I talked with him in the church he confirmed the opinion which I then expressed, but I believe now for the first time put upon paper, as to the light which the foundations of Henry III.'s Lady Chapel throw upon the form of the Confessor's church.

We call the old Lady Chapel that of Henry III. for convenience, but I do not know that he had anything to do with the building of it, further than that when a boy of thirteen he performed the ceremony of laying the first stone.[1] The chapel belonged to the newer fashion and for more than two hundred years stood as part of the rebuilt church, but its plan and form were ruled by the old, to which it was joined on. It is impossible to believe, as some have asked us to do, that at a time when architecture was developing more quickly than it has ever done before or since, the builders of 1220 foresaw and

[1] It was in fact built by the abbey and and by the "subscriptions" of outsiders, as is shown by the existence, amongst the papers of the abbey, of a document in which Abbot Humer, after the manner of the time, grants indulgence to all who helped the work.

prepared for the very complex setting out of the rebuilding to be begun a quarter of a century later. The truth must be that the builders of 1245, finding on the ground a nearly new chapel, which perhaps some of them had helped to build, managed their own plan so as to work it in. We do not know how it was done, because the junction is destroyed or hidden by the Tudor work. But the most obvious way seems to be to have modified its western bay by drawing together its walls to conform to the radiating lines of the adjoining chapels.

The old Lady Chapel ended in a three-sided apse, the foundations of which were brought to light in 1876, close by the great piers, at the east end of the present chapel, which, leaving out the aisles and secondary chapels, agrees with it in plan. It may have extended a little further westwards where the steps are, which would make it over a hundred feet long inside, and it is not likely that it would be built longer, It follows therefore that the apse of the Confessor's church and the aisle round it, from which the Lady Chapel was first entered, must have been near about where the later ones are.

I now leave the Confessor's work.

Sir Gilbert Scott says that the rebuilding of the eastern part of the church by Henry III, extended over twenty-four years 1245–1269. For the former date he gives good documentary proof; the latter is the year of the translation of St. Edward's body to the new shrine, which it has been assumed, not unreasonably, would be made as soon as the building was ready to receive the shrine. But it was still more necessary that the new shrine should be ready to receive the body, and the church may have been ready first. I think it really was so, for the new chapter-house seems to have been in use in 1253,[1] and although perhaps, the chapterhouse, being the lower, might be finished before the church, it is not likely that the church was behind it in the building. Indeed the evidence of the fabric itself is the other way. The chapterhouse shows in its four-light windows an advance in style on the church, which seems to imply a rather later date for the design. And there are indications in the church itself that the

[1] Canvas was bought that year to close the windows, which would not have been necessary if the building were not in use. See *Gleanings*, p. 58.

north transept was the part first begun and that the work there was kept well in advance of that on the south side where the chapterhouse is.[1]

This is indeed what we should expect to find. According to the plan usually followed in those times, as much as possible of the new work would be done before the old, which still continued in use, was interfered with. And here the end of the north transept would be the natural place to begin, because it stood quite free and clear of the old work. The west side of the transept could be gone on with at the same time, and the east side would only interfere with a few chapels, the loss of which would not seriously inconvenience the monks using the church. A good deal of the work about the new chapels round the east end could also be done, and it probably was. But the south transept could not be begun till the old chapterhouse and part of the cloister were pulled down, which would disturb the ordinary life of the monks even more than the moving of the quire to the nave, as must have been done when the time came for pulling down the east end of the church. Both we may be sure would be put off as long as possible.

Henry III.'s rebuilding was a royal work magnificently carried out.[2] I need not dilate on the beauty of the architecture or the splendour of the decorations. And it does not seem very profitable to discuss its bearings on the comparative development of window tracery in England and France at the time of its building. Our business now is with the growth of this particular church.

We have already seen how the new work was limited in the east by the already existing Lady Chapel which was retained. The position of the transept was fixed in its old place by the square of the cloister which could not be altered. The width of the main building was ruled by that of the Norman quire to which it was joined on, and this with the cloister fixed the width of the aisles.

[1] This shows itself most plainly in the triforium arcade. All round the presbytery and the south transept the outer order of the arches varies in a regular succession. In alternate arches it is crocketed, and in the intervening arches alternately moulded and diapered. This succession had not been fixed when the triforium of the north transept was built.

[2] In 1261 the work up to that time was reckoned to have cost £29,345 19*s.* 8*d.* in the money of the time, which in value must have been at least as much as half a million now.

Nevertheless the new building was larger in all possible directions than the old one. A ring of chapels was added round the east end. The transepts are longer and have aisles on both sides, the west on the south being carried over the cloister in a way which I believe is unique, because it might not cut into it. And the new work rose above the old by it seems the whole height of the clearstory.

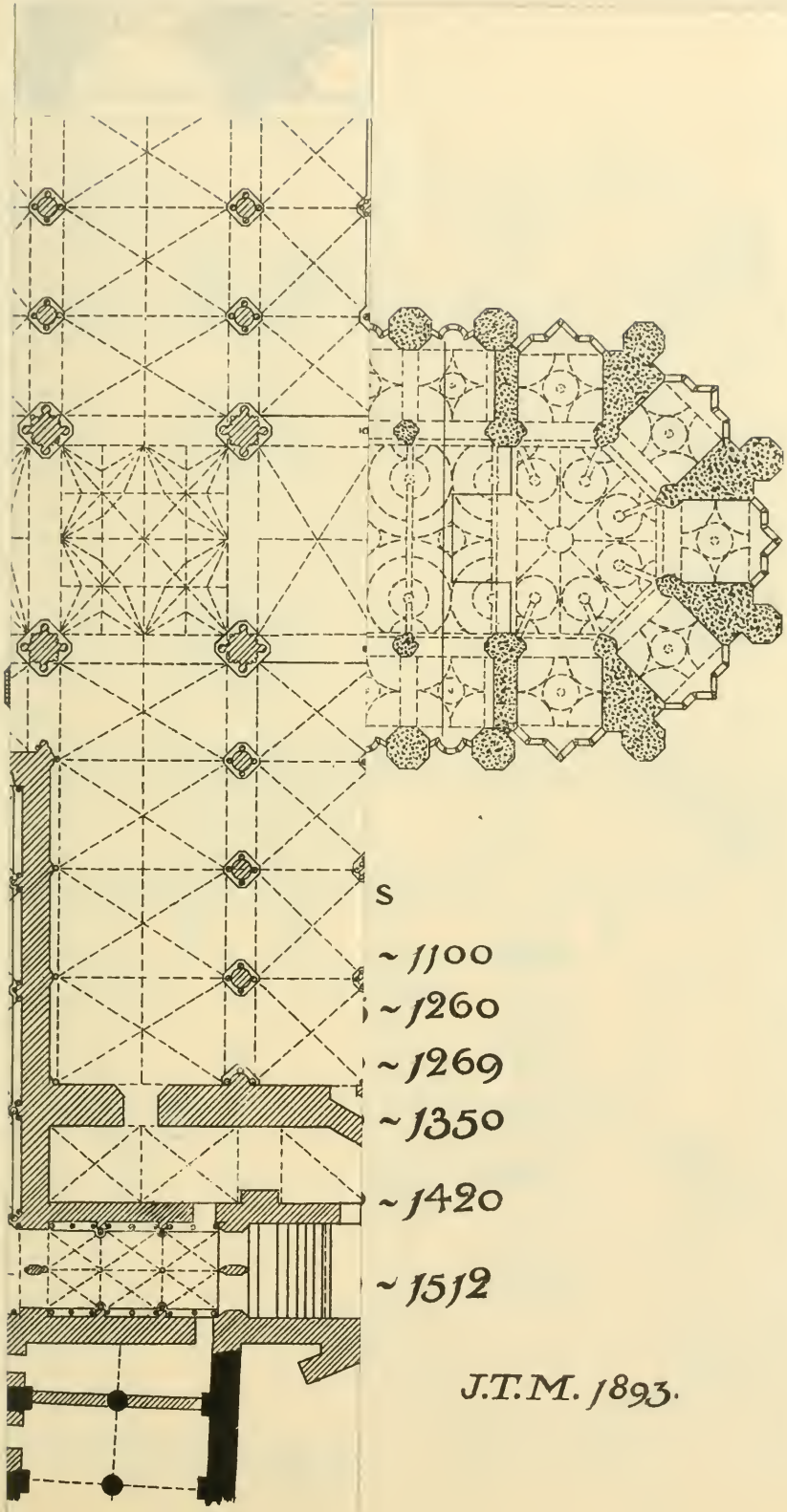
This work extended from the Lady Chapel on the east to one bay beyond the crossing on the west, thus covering the western aisles of the transepts. But the last bay was carried up only to the height of the old work, that is of the ground story and triforium of the new. The clearstory window on each side there has, as Sir Gilbert Scott pointed out,[1] the eastern jamb of this period and the western of the next. Temporary buttresses were no doubt put to support the great arches of the crossing till the clearstory was continued.

Outside the church this work included the chapter-house before-mentioned, which was certainly built on a new site, the revestry, so much of the cloister as lay within the south transept, and its east wall to beyond the chapterhouse door.

The next work was the rebuilding of that part of the western arm of the church which belongs to the quire, and one bay more in the ground story and triforium. The corresponding bays of the north walk of the cloister were rebuilt at the same time.

Ever since men began to distinguish the dates of different parts of the church, this portion has been attributed to Edward I.; but several reasons join to convince me that it also belongs to his father. That it is a distinct work from that east of it is quite clear. One must have been finished or nearly so before the other was begun. But the whole treatment is so exactly the same, that there can not have been any interval. In the thirteenth century a few years would bring changes of style easy to be seen, whereas the differences we find here are just such as might be made by men in the course of their work. The plan of the pillars was improved, bronze bands were used to their shafts instead of marble, and a better treatment of the spandrils of the

[1] *Gleanings*, p. 31.

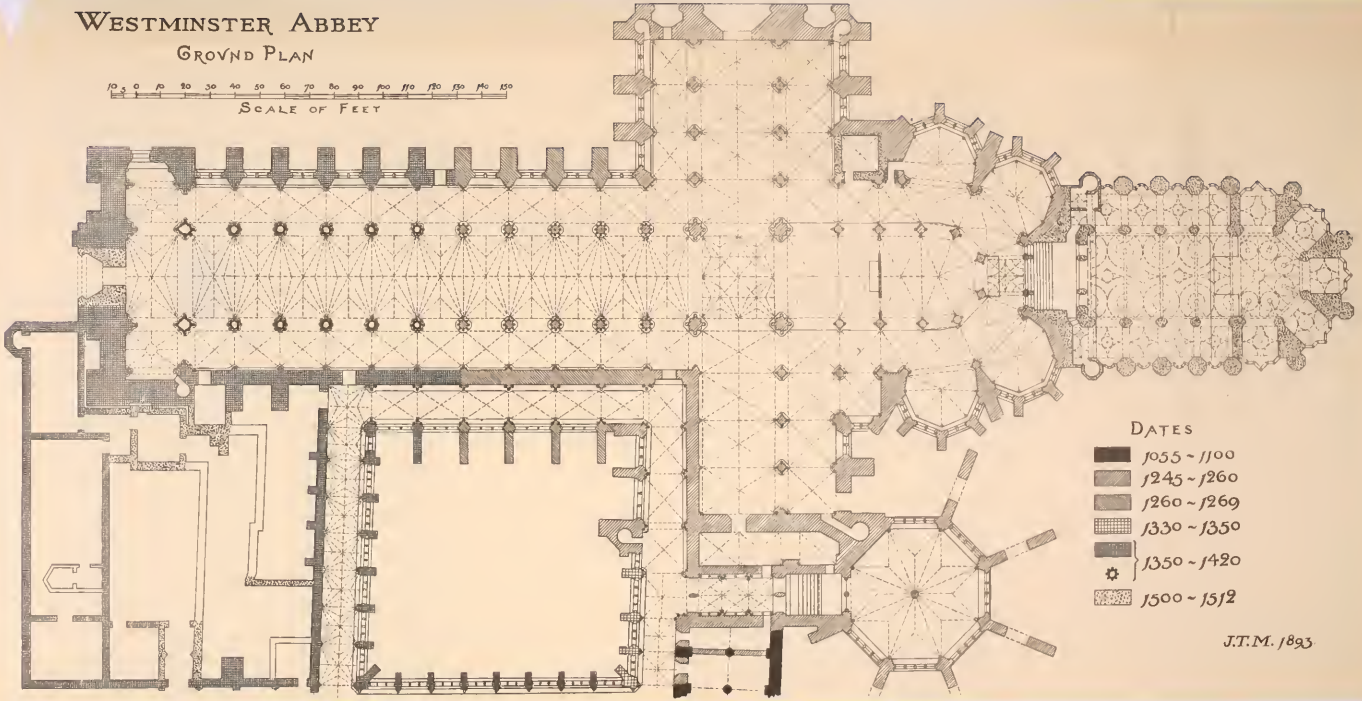

S
~ 1100
~ 1260
~ 1269
~ 1350
~ 1420
~ 1512
J.T.M. 1893.

Westminster Abbey

Ground Plan

10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150

Scale of Feet



wall arcade was introduced, but the general feeling of the work is the same. There is a further argument from the shields in the aisle walls. Although one or two are missing now, we know the subjects of all, and they distinctly belong to the time of Henry III. rather than that of Edward I. Amongst the foreign shields there is that of Raymond of Provence as indeed there might have been had they been put up in Edward's time, but there is not Castile and Leon which would hardly have been left out then.

When all this is considered with the advanced state in which we have found Henry's first work to have been so early as 1253, it seems to show that the new church, in which we are told the monks first sung the service on the 13th of October, 1269,[1] included the whole quire as far west as the pulpitum and a little beyond it.

The state of the church at that time was that the quire and what lay east of it was new, and the nave was of the twelfth century. One bay between them was new but was only carried up as high as the old part, the new clearstory stopping there with the eastern jambs of the windows as it had done at the earlier break. This architectural condition corresponded with the internal divisions of the church; for the nave and quire were each complete in itself, and the intermediate bay was a vestibule between them. There would be no appearance of incongruity inside the building, and men seem to have been content with it for a long time.

The cloisters had been rebuilt with the adjoining parts of the church so far as it lay by them. But little more seems to have been done till the fourteenth century was reached. Then the east walk of the cloister was carried on from where it had been left by Henry III. to the corner. And about the same time the frater was almost entirely rebuilt. Only the lower parts of the Norman walls were kept, and the architectural features in them were buried from view, so that all would seem new. It was a grand hall, thirty-six feet wide and more than one hundred and twenty feet long on the floor, whilst the roof ran on some distance westwards above a gallery.

The rebuilding of the frater was probably not necessary

[1] On the occasion of the translation of the body of St. Edward.

in itself, and the plan seems not to have been changed, but it is evident that the monks in the fourteenth century were beginning to find their house old-fashioned and to wish for something more modern to live in. A general re-building of the domestic parts of the abbey was begun when Simon Langham was abbot, and completed by Nicholas Litlington his successor. The cloister was finished and the infirmary, abbot's house, cellarer's offices and many other places built new from the ground. Much of this work still exists, and we may note in some of it how far the change in the Benedictine manner of life had then gone. The infirmary was no longer a hall for common use, but a number of separate houses, ranged round a court which can only be called a cloister in an architectural sense, for it was a covered passage, and not a place to live in. Another change may be seen in the north walk of the great cloister which was the monks' place of study. Two bays of this part of the fourteenth century work are well known as curious imitations of the work of Henry III. which they continue. The imitation is not only of the general design, such as is not uncommon, but it is carried out in minute details.

There is however one very marked difference between the earlier and the later work. The earlier has its wall face ornamented with arcading and tracery; in the later it is quite plain. When the former was built the monks sat in a row upon the bench against the wall, which being seen was ornamented. But before the two newer bays were built the fashion had changed. The monks had each his separate study, and the studies were ranged on the windowed side of the passage, the wall opposite being hidden by book-cases. The marks of the book-cases in these two and the earlier bays still remain, but those of the studies have been "restored" away.

The actual dates of the work done in the fourteenth century, and the continuation of it later, are not perfectly made out, although a good deal of documentary evidence remains.

There was work going on in the cloister in 1345, when Simon Byrcheston was abbot, and the completion of the east walk of the cloister has been attributed to him. The

style of the work, so far as we can judge of it in its "restored" condition, is rather earlier than might be expected at that time, but not sufficiently so to disprove the attribution, which receives confirmation from the fact that Byrcheston was buried in that part of the cloister. It was the custom to bury a man near to any important work which he had done.

He died in 1349 of the black death, of which also died as many as twenty-six other monks of Westminster. He was succeeded by Simon Langham, who reigned till 1362, when he was made Bishop of Ely. Nicholas Litlington followed, and continued abbot till 1386.

The black death, which stopped work in so many places, seems not to have done so for very long here. We find that they were at work again on the cloister in 1350. In 1353 vaulting was being done in it; in 1354 the foundation of the south walk was laid, and more vaulting done, and again more in 1356 and 1357, when a door was made in the south part of the cloister, which I take to have been that of the parlour. In 1363 ironwork was found for a window in the said parlour, which is called *new*, and in 1363 the account was balanced up, as the cloister was finished.

From this it appears that the cloister was nearly finished when Langham was abbot. His successor went on with the outlying buildings, putting his initials on them rather freely, so that he has received full credit for what he did. On Langham's death he left a rich legacy to the abbey, and that no doubt hastened the completion of the work, in which he evidently took great interest, and perhaps something of it was left to be spent upon the church.

The story of the rebuilding of the nave is difficult to read because, though it was spread over so many years, the design once laid down was kept to, and the details not changed. The design is that of Henry III.'s work continued, and the details seem to me to belong rather to the fourteenth century than to the fifteenth.

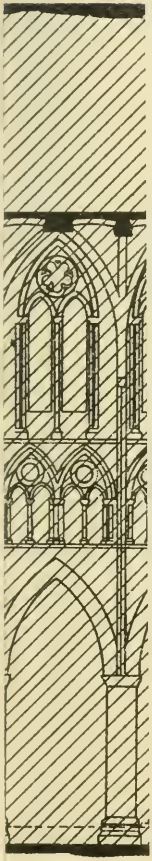
As early as 1342 we find a good deal of work going on in the nave. It is called "new work in the old church," and the account includes for whitewashing the walls. And I think that at this time the intention was rather

to modernize the old church, much as was being done about the same time with the Norman naves at Norwich and Peterborough, and not to rebuild the whole. It is to be noted that most of the items seem to refer to windows.

But the wall of the south aisle, corresponding with the three western bays of the cloister, seems to have been rebuilt with them. And if so, whatever order we may assign to the rebuilding of the cloister, the rebuilding of the nave must have been determined on before 1363. It is, however, not until 1388 that we find any account for the pulling down of the old work. And from that time the work seems to have gone on steadily but slowly all through the reign of Richard II. It seems to have almost stopped in Henry IV.'s time, but was taken up again in his son's, who appointed a commission to carry it on. It seems then to have gone on quickly for a time, and in the third year we find lead bought to cover one side (*costa*), which probably means an aisle. The building was therefore well advanced, and I think the upper vault was nearly all done when, for some reason—probably the king's death—the work ceased, and the west end and the junction with quire eastward were not made till quite the end of the century, or the beginning of the next.

This last work shows itself plainly in the building, and in the vaulting of the last bays there are Tudor badges. The earlier work is so uniform in character that it is difficult to trace the order of it. But it may be noted that the carving in the wall arcade, so far as it remains amongst the monuments, is quite "decorated" in character, and I think that the whole of the outer walls were begun and carried to some height in the fourteenth century. But a good deal of the western part, and the bay with the door on the north side, have the carving left in block, which seems to tell of a cessation of the work when the carving of the part next the cloister was finished, and the rest only in progress.

Before the old nave was pulled down the east end of the quire was closed by a solid wall, and though it is probable that the new nave was used at least for processions long before it was finished, the partition wall seems



1245

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

LONGITVDINAL SECTION

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150

SCALE OF FEET

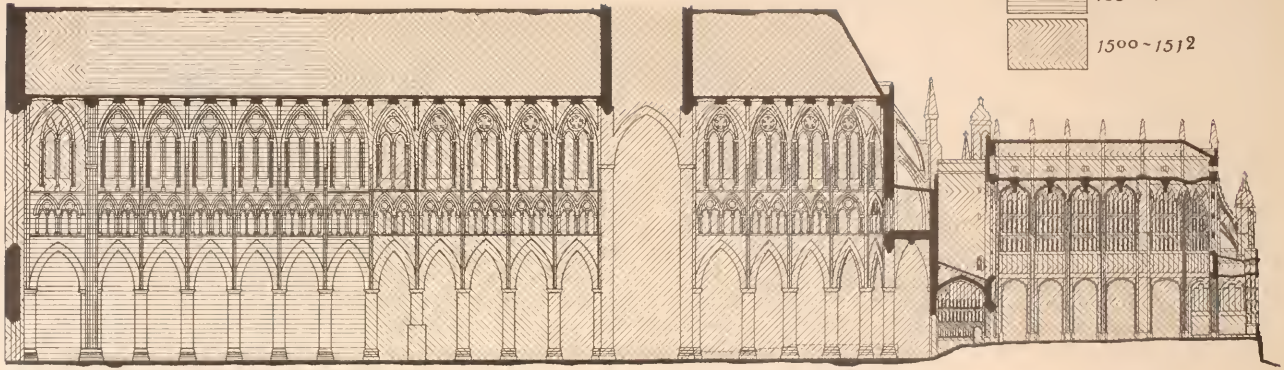
DATES

1245 ~ 1260

1260 ~ 1269

1350 ~ 1420

1500 ~ 1512



c 1500

1350 ~ 1420

c 1500

1260 ~ 1269

1245 ~ 1260

1500 ~ 1512

J.T.M. 1893

to have stood for a century. That it was a substantial wall is proved by the later builders having got a little out of the level with the string courses, which they would not have done if they could have ruled them through.[1]

The nave was scarcely finished before the thirteenth-century Lady Chapel was pulled down to make way for another, and the last royal work—the new Lady Chapel—of King Henry VII., which brought the church into the form it still has.

Meanwhile some changes had been going on in the other buildings of the abbey, which must have greatly altered the appearance of the place, but of which I think notice has not been taken before. It was the provision of private apartments, and even complete houses for individual monks. The work was chiefly of timber, and within this century much of it has been destroyed. At the suppression of the abbey, the houses were portioned out to the members of the new foundation, who lived in them, and altered them to suit themselves, and twice within this century, first, when the number of prebendaries was reduced, and again lately, when some property was transferred from the Chapter to the School, there has been general destruction. The work which was evidently addition to the stone buildings was, I believe, thought by most to be later than the suppression in date, as indeed some of it was, but a good deal was older. These parasitic chambers were crowded round the dorter in every place where one could be got in. The most considerable part yet remaining is worked up into the organist's house, and it has by some mistake, the origin of which I do not know, had the impossible name of *Litlington's bell tower* given to it. It is a great stack of chambers built at least a hundred years after Litlington's time against the south-east corner of the dorter, into which it had a door. A little further north there is a large chamber with a Tudor fire-place above the chapel of the Common House, and thence northwards

[1] The clearstory windows in the bay of junction do not range either with those to the east or those to the west of them. I have not yet been able to find any reason for this, but unless the eastern jambs have been altered a difference was made in Henry III.'s work.

to the end of the dorter, the outside of the wall is covered with evidence of other such buildings, as may be seen from the present gymnasium. On the other side there was a good-sized house at the south, afterwards worked up into the east wing of Ashburnham House, and pulled down with much older work in 1883, and there was another chamber with a fire-place over the dark cloister, where there is still a room with a good deal of the old work left in it.

Whether more chambers were formed in the dorter itself the alterations and accidents of three and a half centuries, culminating in our time in the complete modernisation of the great school-room, have left no evidence: I think it likely. But without them the chambers already mentioned, with those in the Infirmary, would be enough to give his own apartment to every monk; for there were in the later years of the abbey only about thirty of them. Some of the chambers are mentioned with the names of the occupants in the inventory of goods at the suppression, from which we also learn that the prior had a house with an entry, a kitchen, a hall, a parlour, and a buttery, and also a garden.

The abbot had his separate house from the beginning, and it was always the house of a great lord, but as time went on, and the desire for privacy and domestic comfort increased, the house of the "religious" lord improved, perhaps more quickly than that of the secular. Abbot Litlington rebuilt the house here at Westminster, and it seems to have served as he left it till about the beginning of the sixteenth century, when on the north side of the court a stone building was set up, and one of wood at the south-east, which extends partly over the cloister. These buildings, which were probably connected by a gallery, are quite of domestic character. And it may be noted that the wooden building takes away the light of the older monks' parlour, from which we may infer that by that time the use of the parlour as the ante-room to the cloister, beyond which strangers who had business with any of the monks might not go, was no longer cared for, as the common privacy of the cloister had given place to the individual privacy of each monk in his chamber or study.

Unless this change is known it is impossible to understand the later developments of monastic buildings. With it we may see the meaning of these changes, which the mere moulding-monger despises, and, when he can, destroys, to "restore" the earlier design, but which tell us of the life of those who inhabited the buildings, and how it was slowly altered as time went on, and refinement or laxity—which you will—increased.

I feel that though this paper has run to some length, it is but a poor telling of the story of Westminster Abbey. There is so much more that might have been said about the building, not to speak of the tombs and other precious things which it enshrines. The apology for the paper is that it is intended as a preface to our visit to the abbey to-morrow, and that I hope then to point out the evidence for statements which I have here only baldly made.